G. M. Williams

Xmas 1921.

106 80

G. M. Williams
19 Manners Rd.
Southsea.

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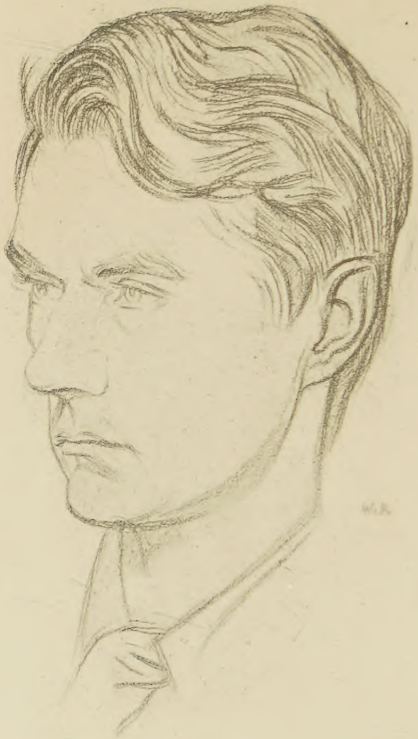
POEMS 1908—1914

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POEMS—
SWORDS AND PLOUGHSHARES. 1915
OLTON POOLS. 1916
TIDES. 1917
LOYALTIES. 1919

PLAYS—
COPHETUA. 1911
REBELLION. 1914
PAWNS. THREE PLAYS. 1917
ABRAHAM LINCOLN. 1918
MARY STUART. 1921
OLIVER CROMWELL. 1921

PROSE STUDIES—
WILLIAM MORRIS. 1912
SWINBURNE. 1913
THE LYRIC. 1915
PROSE PAPERS. 1917



John Drinkwater

From a drawing by William Rothenstein

1917

Emery Walker ph. sc.

Poems 1908–1914
by John Drinkwater

London: Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd.
3 Adam Street, Adelphi MCMXXI

First Edition of this Selection, November 1917
Second Impression, December 1917
Third Impression, February 1919
Fourth Impression, December 1919
Fifth Impression, March 1921

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TO

ERNEST DE SÉLINCOURT

NOTE

THIS volume contains a selection from the poems in four books published between 1908 and 1914: *Lyrical and Other Poems*, *Poems of Men and Hours*, *Poems of Love and Earth*, and *Adventures*. The last named was published in the same volume as *Cromwell*, of which poem nothing is here included save the detached epilogue. Apart from the Cromwell poem itself, the present selection contains all that I am anxious to preserve from those volumes, and there is nothing before 1908 which I should wish to be reprinted now or at any time. Friendly readers may honour me by regretting this or that omission, and I should be glad to know that some of my rejected poems were held in good opinion. But I am content that my non-dramatic poetry between 1908 and 1914, with the exception above named, should be judged by this selection, any addition to which would, I think, rather weaken it than otherwise.

June Dance has been largely rewritten since its first publication; otherwise I have, with trifling exceptions, refrained from any revision of the poems. It is the poet's privilege to think

that he writes better as he grows older, but it is at best an indiscretion for a present manner to attempt the handling of a mood that is gone. I have allowed myself nothing but the occasional correction of obvious inexperience in craftsmanship, and for the rest I am glad, in reading these poems again, to find how near they are to the spirit that of all I should have chosen to be the spring of my later work.

The earlier volumes were dedicated to Thomas Kennedy, a friend of the days when I first loved poetry; to Barry Jackson, whose friendship has meant so much to my art; to R. C. Lehmann, whose early advice and encouragement came when they most were needed; to John Masefield, who has given a poet's praise to work that I hope he likes half as well as I like his; and to my wife. To these names I add another, in gratitude for much that has stimulated the making of that which I now offer.

J. D.

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POEMS, 1908—1914

SYMBOLS

I saw history in a poet's song,
In a river-reach and a gallows-hill,
In a bridal bed, and a secret wrong,
In a crown of thorns: in a daffodil.

I imagined measureless time in a day,
And starry space in a wagon-road,
And the treasure of all good harvests lay
In the single seed that the sower sowed.

My garden-wind had driven and havened again
All ships that ever had gone to sea,
And I saw the glory of all dead men
In the shadow that went by the side of me.

SEALED

The doves call down the long arcades of pine,
The screaming swifts are tiring towards their
eaves,
And you are very quiet, O lover of mine.

No foot is on your ploughlands now, the song
Fails and is no more heard among your leaves
That wearied not in praise the whole day long.

I have watched with you till this twilight-fall.
The proud companion of your loveliness;
Have you no word for me, no word at all?

The passion of my thought I have given you,
Striving towards your passion, nevertheless,
The clover leaves are deepening to the dew,

And I am still unsatisfied, untaught.
You lie guarded in mystery, you go
Into your night, and leave your lover naught.

Would I were Titan with immeasurable thews
To hold you trembling, lover of mine, and know
To the full the secret savour that you use

Now to my tormenting. I would drain
Your beauty to the last sharp glory of it;
You should work mightily through me, blood
and brain.

Your heart in my heart's mastery should burn,
And you before my swift and arrogant wit
Should be no longer proudly taciturn.

You should bend back astonished at my kiss,
Your wisdom should be armourer to my pride,
And you, subdued, should yet be glad of this.

The joys of great heroic lovers dead
Should seem but market-gossiping beside
The annunciation of our bridal bed.

And now, my lover earth, I am a leaf,
A wave of light, a bird's note, a blade sprung
Towards the oblivion of the sickled sheaf;

A mere mote driven against your royal ease,
A tattered eager traveller among
The myriads beating on your sanctuaries.

I have no strength to crush you to my will,
Your beauty is invulnerably zoned,
Yet I, your undefeated lover still,

Exulting in your sap am clear of shame,
And biding with you patiently am throned
Above the flight of desolation's aim.

You may be mute, bestow no recompense
On all the thriftless leaguers of my soul—
I am at your gates, O lover of mine, and thence

Will I not turn for any scorn you send,
Rebuked, bemused, yet is my purpose whole,
I shall be striving towards you till the end.

LORD OF TIME

That I, some nameless æons hence,
May be a god, god fashioning,
With stars to break or recompense,
Is that so great a thing?

It may be so. Some giant hand
May finger me as excellent clay,
Till I shall walk a cleaner land
In a more urgent day.

To the artificer joy. But now
Great days and passion of earth I crave,
True lips, the red rose of the bough,
The white rose of the wave.

There are known walls wherein I move
In joy no promised joy can veil,
And all my mastery of love
Is as a fireside tale.

The word that shapes a word again,
The storied song, the coloured year,
Laughter and tragic trust of men,
And fear that will not fear,

That straw that blows about the gate,
Those eyes that are my other sight,—
Of such are builded the estate
I know before the night.

Life and firece life and life alone
Here upon earth I seek and claim,
Till my proud flesh again is thrown
To sea and wind and flame.

The gods are just ; eternity
May gird me for its lordlier clime ;
But here, where time encircles me,
I am a lord of time.

A PRAYER

Lord, not for light in darkness do we pray,
Not that the veil be lifted from our eyes,
Nor that the slow ascension of our day
Be otherwise.

Not for a clearer vision of the things
Whereof the fashioning shall make us great,
Not for remission of the peril and stings
Of time and fate.

Not for a fuller knowledge of the end
Whereto we travel, bruised yet unafraid,
Nor that the little healing that we lend
Shall be repaid.

Not these, O Lord. We would not break the bars
Thy wisdom sets about us; we shall climb
Unfettered to the secrets of the stars
In Thy good time.

We do not crave the high perception swift
When to refrain were well, and when fulfil,
Nor yet the understanding strong to sift
The good from ill.

Not these, O Lord. For these Thou hast revealed,
We know the golden season when to reap
The heavy-fruited treasure of the field,
The hour to sleep.

Not these. We know the hemlock from the rose,
The pure from stained, the noble from the base,
The tranquil holy light of truth that glows
On Pity's face.

We know the paths wherein our feet should press,
Across our hearts are written Thy decrees,
Yet now, O Lord, be merciful to bless
With more than these.

Grant us the will to fashion as we feel,
Grant us the strength to labour as we know,
Grant us the purpose, ribbed and edged with steel,
To strike the blow.

Knowledge we ask not—knowledge Thou hast lent,
But, Lord, the will—there lies our bitter need,
Give us to build above the deep intent
The deed, the deed.

VIGIL

I WATCH the good ships on the sea,
Yet never ship comes home to me.

Out of the crowded ports they sail
To crowded ports that cry them hail.

And still they bring no word to me,
Tall-masted ships upon the sea.

As gallant messengers they go
Laughing against all winds that blow.

Yet never ship upon the sea
Bears blessed merchandise for me.

I watch them pass from friend to friend
All day from world's end to world's end.

No pleasant ship comes down to me
Along the long leagues of the sea.

Nor sign nor salutation made,
Beyond the far sea-line they fade.

Yet as I watch them on the sea
All ships are piloted by me.

EXPECTANCY

I KNOW the night is heavy with her stars,—
So much I know,—
I know the sun will lead the night away,
And lay his golden bars
Over the fields and mountains and great seas,
I know that he will usher in the day
With litanies
Of birds and young dawn-winds. So much I know,—
So little though.

I know that I am lost in a great waste,
A trackless world
Of stars and golden days, where shadows go
In mute and secret haste,
Paying no heed to supplicating cries
Of spirits lost and troubled,—this I know.
The regal skies
Utter no word, nor wind, nor changing sea,—
It frightens me.

Yet I believe that somewhere, soon or late,
A peace will fall
Upon the angry reaches of my mind;
A peace initiate
In some heroic hour when I behold
A friend's long-quested triumph, or unbind
The tressèd gold
From a child's laughing face. I still believe,—
So much believe.

Or, when the reapers leave the swathèd grain,
I'll look beyond
The yellowing hazels in the twilight-tide,
Beyond the flowing plain,
And see blue mountains piled against a sky
Flung out in coloured ceremonial pride;
Then haply I
Shall be no longer troubled, but shall know,—
It may be so.

THE BUILDING

WHENCE these hods, and bricks of bright red
clay,
And swart men climbing ladders in the night?

Stilled are the clamorous energies of day,
The streets are dumb, and, prodigal of light,
The lamps but shine upon a city of sleep,
A step goes out into the silence; far
Across the quiet roofs the hour is tolled
From ghostly towers; the indifferent earth
may keep
That ragged flotsam shielded from the cold
In earth's good time: not, moving among men,
Shall he compel so fortunate a star.
Pavements I know, forsaken now, are strange,
Alien walks not beautiful, that then,
In the familiar day, are part of all
My breathless pilgrimage, not beautiful, but
dear;
The monotony of sound has suffered change,
The eddies of wanton sound are spent, and
clear
To bleak monotonies of silence fall.

And, while the city sleeps, in the central poise
Of quiet, lamps are flaming in the night,
Blown to long tongues by winds that moan
between
The growing walls, and throwing misty light

On swart men bearing bricks of bright red clay
In laden hods ; and ever the thin noise
Of trowels deftly fashioning the clean
Long lines that are the shaping of proud thought.
Ghost-like they move between the day and day.
These men whose labour strictly shall be wrought
Into the captive image of a dream.
Their sinews weary not, the plummet falls
To measured use from steadfast hands apace,
And momently the moist and levelled seam
Knits brick to brick and momently the walls
Bestow the wonder of form on formless space.

And whence all these ? The hod and plummet-line,
The trowels tapping, and the lamps that shine
In long, dust-heavy beams from wall to wall,
The mortar and the bricks of bright red clay,
Ladder and corded scaffolding, and all
The gear of common traffic—whence are they ?
And whence the men who use them ?
When he came,
God upon chaos, crying in the name
Of all adventurous vision that the void
Should yield up man, and man, created, rose
Out of the deep, the marvel of all things made,
Then in immortal wonder was destroyed
All worth of trivial knowledge, and the close
Of man's most urgent meditation stayed

Even as his first thought—"Whence am I
sprung?"
What proud ecstatic mystery was pent
In that first act for man's astonishment,
From age to unconfessing age, among
His manifold travel. And in all I see
Of common daily usage is renewed
This primal and ecstatic mystery
Of chaos bidden into many-hued
Wonders of form, life in the void create,
And monstrous silence made articulate.

Not the first word of God upon the deep
Nor the first pulse of life along the day
More marvellous than these new walls that
sweep
Starward, these lines that discipline the clay,
These lamps swung in the wind that send their
light
On swart men climbing ladders in the night.
No trowel-tap but sings anew for men
The rapture of quickening water and continent,
No mortared line but witnesses again
Chaos transfigured into lineament.

FORSAKEN

THE word is said, and I no more shall know
Aught of the changing story of her days,
Nor any treasure that her lips bestow.

And I, who loving her was wont to praise
All things in love, now reft of music go
With silent step down unfrequented ways.

My soul is like a lonely market-place,
Where late were laughing folk and shining steeds
And many things of comeliness and grace;

And now between the stones are twisting weeds,
No sound there is, nor any friendly face,
Save for a bedesman telling o'er his beads.

THE SOLDIER

The large report of fame I lack,
And shining clasps and crimson scars,
For I have held my bivouac
Alone amid the untroubled stars.

My battle-field has known no dawn
Beclouded by a thousand spears;
I've been no mounting tyrant's pawn
To buy his glory with my tears.

It never seemed a noble thing
Some little leagues of land to gain
From broken men, nor yet to fling
Abroad the thunderbolts of pain.

Yet I have felt the quickening breath
As peril heavy peril kissed—
My weapon was a little faith,
And fear was my antagonist.

Not a brief hour of cannonade,
But many days of bitter strife,
Till God of His great pity laid
Across my brow the leaves of life.

THE FIRES OF GOD

I

Time gathers to my name ;
Along the ways wheredown my feet have passed
I see the years with little triumph crowned,
Exulting not for perils dared, downcast
And weary-eyed and desolate for shame
Of having been unstirred of all the sound
Of the deep music of the men that move
Through the world's days in suffering and love.

Poor barren years that brooded over-much
On your own burden, pale and stricken years—
Go down to your oblivion, we part
With no reproach or ceremonial tears.
Henceforth my hands are lifted to the touch
Of hands that labour with me, and my heart
Hereafter to the world's heart shall be set
And its own pain forget.
Time gathers to my name—
Days dead are dark ; the days to be, a flame
Of wonder and of promise, and great cries
Of travelling people reach me—I must rise.

II

Was I not man? Could I not rise alone
Above the shifting of the things that be,
Rise to the crest of all the stars and see
The ways of all the world as from a throne?
Was I not man, with proud imperial will
To cancel all the secrets of high heaven?
Should not my sole unbridled purpose fill
All hidden paths with light when once was riven
God's veil by my indomitable will?

So dreamt I, little man of little vision,
Great only in unconsecrated pride;
Man's pity grew from pity to derision,
And still I thought, "Albeit they deride,
Yet is it mine uncharted ways to dare
Unknown to these,
And they shall stumble darkly, unaware
Of solemn mysteries
Whereof the key is mine alone to bear."

So I forgot my God, and I forgot
The holy sweet communion of men,
And moved in desolate places, where are not
Meek hands held out with patient healing when
The hours are heavy with uncharitable pain;
No company but vain
And arrogant thoughts were with me at my side.
And ever to myself I lied,
Saying "Apart from all men thus I go
To know the things that they may never know."

III

Then a great change befell:
Long time I stood
In witless hardihood
With eyes on one sole changeless vision set—
The deep disturbèd fret
Of men who made brief tarrying in hell
On their earth travelling.
It was as though the lives of men should be
Set circle-wise, whereof one little span
Through which all passed was blackened with
the wing
Of perilous evil, bateless misery.
But all beyond, making the whole complete
O'er which the travelling feet
Of every man
Made way or ever he might come to death,
Was odorous with the breath
Of honey-laden flowers, and alive
With sacrificial ministrations sweet
Of man to man, and swift and holy loves,
And large heroic hopes, whereby should thrive
Man's spirit as he moves
From dawn of life to the great dawn of death.

It was as though mine eyes were set alone
Upon that woeful passage of despair,
Until I held that life had never known
Dominion but in this most troubled place
Where many a ruined grace

And many a friendless care
Ran to and fro in sorrowful unrest.
Still in my hand I pressed
Hope's fragile chalice, whence I drew deep draughts
That heartened me that even yet should grow
Out of this dread confusion, as of broken crafts
Driven along ungovernable seas,
Prosperous order, and that I should know
After long vigil all the mysteries
Of human wonder and of human fate.

O fool, O only great
In pride unhallowed, O most blind of heart!
Confusion but more dark confusion bred,
Grief nurtured grief, I cried aloud and said,
"Through trackless ways the soul of man is hurled,
No sign upon the forehead of the skies,
No beacon, and no chart
Are given to him, and the inscrutable world
But mocks his scars and fills his mouth with dust."

And lies bore lies
And lust bore lust,
And the world was heavy with flowerless rods,
And pride outran
The strength of a man
Who had set himself in the place of gods.

IV

Soon was I then to gather bitter shame
Of spirit; I had been most wildly proud—
Yet in my pride had been
Some little courage, formless as a cloud,
Unpiloted save by a vagrant wind,
But still an earnest of the bonds that tame
The legionary hates, of sacred loves that lean
From the high soul of man towards his kind.
And all my grief
Had been for those I watched go to and fro
In uncompassioned woe
Along that little span my unbelief
Had fashioned in my vision as all life.
Now even this so little virtue waned,
For I became caught up into the strife
That I had pitied, and my soul was stained
At last by that most venomous despair,
Self-pity.
I no longer was aware
Of any will to heal the world's unrest,
I suffered as it suffered, and I grew
Troubled in all my daily trafficking,
Not with the large heroic trouble known
By proud adventurous men who would atone
With their own passionate pity for the sting
And anguish of a world of peril and snares,
It was the trouble of a soul in thrall
To mean despairs,
Driven about a waste where neither fall

Of words from lips of love, nor consolation
Of grave eyes comforting, nor ministration
Of hand or heart could pierce the deadly wall
Of self—of self,—I was a living shame—
A broken purpose. I had stood apart
With pride rebellious and defiant heart,
And now my pride had perished in the flame.
I cried for succour as a little child
Might supplicate whose days are undefiled,—
For tutored pride and innocence are one.

To the gloom has won
A gleam of the sun
And into the barren desolate ways
A scent is blown
As of meadows mown
By cooling rivers in clover days.

v

I turned me from that place in humble wise,
And fingers soft were laid upon mine eyes,
And I beheld the fruitful earth, with store
Of odorous treasure, full and golden grain,
Ripe orchard bounty, slender stalks that bore
Their flowered beauty with a meek content,
The prosperous leaves that loved the sun and rain,
Shy creatures unreproved that came and went
In garrulous joy among the fostering green.
And, over all, the changes of the day
And ordered year their mutable glory laid—
Expectant winter soberly arrayed,
The prudent diligent spring whose eyes have seen
The beauty of the roses uncreate,
Imperial June, magnificent, elate
Beholding all the ripening loves that stray
Among her blossoms, and the golden time
Of the full ear and bounty of the boughs,—
And the great hills and solemn chanting seas
And prodigal meadows, answering to the chime
Of God's good year, and bearing on their brows
The glory of processional mysteries
From dawn to dawn, the woven leaves and light
Of the high noon, the twilight secrecies,
And the inscrutable wonder of the stars
Flung out along the reaches of the night.

And the ancient might
Of the binding bars
Waned as I woke to a new desire
For the choric song
Of exultant, strong
Earth-passionate men with souls of fire.

VI

'Twas given me to hear. As I beheld—
With a new wisdom, tranquil, asking not
For mystic revelation—this glory long forgot,
This re-discovered triumph of the earth
In high creative will and beauty's pride
Established beyond the assaulting years,
It came to me, a music that compelled
Surrender of all tributary fears,
Full-throated, fierce, and rhythmic with the wide
Beat of the pilgrim winds and labouring seas,
Sent up from all the harbouring ways of earth
Wherein the travelling feet of men have trod,
Mounting the firmamental silences
And challenging the golden gates of God.

We bear the burden of the years
Clean limbed, clear-hearted, open-browed,
Albeit sacramental tears
Have dimmed our eyes, we know the proud
Content of men who sweep unbowed
Before the legionary fears;
In sorrow we have grown to be
The masters of adversity.

Wise of the storied ages we,
Of perils dared and crosses borne,
Of heroes bound by no decree
Of laws defiled or faiths outworn,
Of poets who have held in scorn
All mean and tyrannous things that be;
We prophesy with lips that sped
The songs of the prophetic dead.

Wise of the brief belovèd span
Of this our glad earth-travelling,
Of beauty's bloom and ordered plan,
Of love and love's compassioning,
Of all the dear delights that spring
From man's communion with man;
We cherish every hour that strays
Adown the cataract of the days.

We see the clear untroubled skies,
We see the summer of the rose
And laugh, nor grieve that clouds will rise
And wax with every wind that blows,
Nor that the blossoming time will close,
For beauty seen of humble eyes
Immortal habitation has
Though beauty's form may pale and pass.

Wise of the great unshapen age,
To which we move with measured tread
All girt with passionate truth to wage
High battle for the word unsaid,
The song unsung, the cause unled,
The freedom that no hope can gauge;
Strong-armed, sure-footed, iron-willed
We sift and weave, we break and build.

Into one hour we gather all
The years gone down, the years unwrought
Upon our ears brave measures fall
Across uncharted spaces brought,
Upon our lips the words are caught
Wherewith the dead the unborn call;
From love to love, from height to height
We press and none may curb our might.

VII

O blessed voices, O compassionate hands,
Calling and healing, O great-hearted brothers!
I come to you. Ring out across the lands
Your benediction, and I too will sing
With you, and haply kindle in another's
Dark desolate hour the flame you stirred in me.
O bountiful earth, in adoration meet
I bow to you; O glory of years to be,
I too will labour to your fashioning.
Go down, go down, unweariable feet,
Together we will march towards the ways
Wherein the marshalled hosts of morning wait
In sleepless watch, with banners wide unfurled
Across the skies in ceremonial state,
To greet the men who lived triumphant days,
And stormed the secret beauty of the world.

CHALLENGE

You fools behind the panes who peer
    At the strong black anger of the sky,
    Come out and feel the storm swing by,
Aye, take its blow on your lips, and hear
    The wind in the branches cry.

No. Leave us to the day's device,
    Draw to your blinds and take your ease,
    Grow peak'd in the face and crook'd in the
        knees;
Your sinews could not pay the price
    When the storm goes through the trees.

THE LOOM OF THE POETS

(TO THOMAS HARDY)

I

THEY who are sceptred of the poets' race
Their high dominion bear by this alone—
That they report the world as they have known
The world, nor seek with slavish hands to trace
Poor profitable smiles upon the face
Of truth when smiles are none, nor fear to own
The bitterness of beauty overthrown,
But hold in hate the gilded lie's disgrace.

And such are you, O singer of the gloom
Where-through in travail you have slowly won:
Albeit your song is heavy with the doom
Of men whose little strivings are foredone,
Yet is it woven on the living loom
Of your own suffering beneath the sun.

II

And herein lies great solace. Who shall say
If this austere and lonely utterance
Be closer knit to truth than theirs who dance
With happy hearts along the laughing way?
Or matters it? We know that you as they
Tell of the truth as you have seen it glance
Across the shadowed tracks of fate and chance,
At best a fitful promise of the day.

Great patience must be ours ere we may know
The secrets held by labyrinthine time;
The ways are rough, the journeying is slow,
The perils deep,—till we have conquered these
And break at length upon the golden clime
He serves us best who sings but as he sees.

THE DEAD CRITIC

Not of the high heroic line was he
Who wrought the world's deep music, but he knew
The spring pellucid whence rapt poets drew
Brave draughts of Hippocrene; he held in fee
The songs that woke to immortality,
Trembling from other lips. His loving grew
From loving unto prophecy; he threw
Untruth from out the fields of poesy.

Yea, though he sang not, he was unto song
A light, a benediction. His desire
Was but to serve his heroes, and we reap
The fruit of his humility. Among
Their names shall his be spoken, and their quire
Shall let him fall upon no barren sleep.

LINES FOR THE OPENING OF THE BIRMINGHAM REPERTORY THEATRE

To you good ease, and grace to love us well:
To us good ease, and grace some tale to tell
Worthy your love. We stand with one consent
To plead anew a holy argument—
For art is holy. We, to whom there falls
The charge that men may see within these walls
The comely chronicle of comely plays,
You, who shall quicken us with blame or praise
Desire alike but this, that here shall spring
Such issue of our labour as may bring
Fresh laurels to the altars that have known
Service of men whose passion might atone
For worlds than this more faithless, men whose names
Are very life—aye, swift and urgent flames
Of living are they. These are over us
To lighten all our travel: Aeschylus
Euripides, the Sophoclean song,
And Aristophanes who captured wrong
In nets of laughter, lords of the Attic stage,
The fourfold Greek dominion; and the age
Of nameless poets when the hope began
To quicken from the blood of *Everyman*
Into the splendour of Marlowe's kingly lust
Of kingly life, the glory that thieves nor rust
Can ever spoil, whose name is manifold—
Ford, Massinger, Dekker, Webster aureoled

With light of hell made holy, Middleton,
Chapman, Beaumont and Fletcher, aye, and
one
Whom even these the lords of beauty's passion
Might crown for beauty's high imperial fashion
In classic calm of intellectual rule,
Ben Jonson. Sirs, I am nor wit nor fool
To speak in praise of him whose name is praise,
Whose word is on the forehead of the days,
Shakespeare, our master tried and proved how
well,
Mortality's immortal chronicle.

Under the warrant of these men we sail,
And theirs whose later labour these might hail,
Congreve and Otway: the Good-Natured Man,
Proud tattered Oliver: Dick Sheridan,
Who played at passion, but free-born of wit
Put scandal out to school and laughed at it;
These few that stand between the golden age
When poets made a marvel of the stage
And—do we dare to dream it?—an age that
stirred
But yesterday, whereof the dawning word,—
Spoken when Ibsen spake, and here reset
To many tunes on lips untutored yet
For speech Olympian, albeit pure of will,—
Shall ripen into witness that we still
Are countrymen of those glad poets dead;
The seed is sown, the barren days are sped.

And they who sowed, are sowing? He beguiled
By who shall say what envious madness, Wilde,
Misfortune's moth and laughter's new wing-feather,
Remembering now no black despiteful weather:
Hankin, and he, the cleanser of our day,
Whose art is both a Preface and a Play,
And he who pities, as poets have pitied, life
Of *Justice* reft, so driven and torn in *Strife*,
And one who cries in *Waste* some news of man,
And one who finds in the bruised hearts of *Nan*
And *Pompey* tragic and old yet timeless things:
And that dead Playboy, and his peer who sings
Yet of Cuchulain by the western sea—
Of these is sown the seed that yet shall be
A heavy-waggoned harvest, masters mine,
Gathered by men whom now the immoderate wine
Of song is making ready.

In these walls
Look not for that light trickery that falls
To death at birth, wrought piecemeal at the will
Of apes who seek to ply their mimic skill:
Here shall the player work as work he may,
Yet shall he work in service of the play.
Nor shall you here find pitiful release
From life's large pressure, nay, but new increase

Of life made urgent by these master-men
Who are our captains. Life, and life again—
Tragic or brave, free-witted, gentle, signed
Of beauty's passion or the adventurous mind,
Or light as orchard blossom, motley wear,
But life's wear always—that shall be our care
And all shall surely follow. What may be
Hereafter—to the heavens, to us to see
No will transgressing on the poet's wish,
To you to judge the meat before the dish.
May you that watch and we that serve so grow
In wisdom as adventuring we go
That some unwavering light from us may shine.
We have the challenge of the mighty line—
God grant us grace to give the countersign.

EPILOGUE FOR A MASQUE

A LITTLE time they lived again, and lo!
Back to the quiet night the shadows go,
And the great folds of silence once again
Are over fools and kings and fighting-men.

A little while they went with stumbling feet,
With spears of hate, and love all flowery sweet,
With wondering hearts and bright adventurous
wills,
And now their dust is on a thousand hills.

We dream of them, as men unborn shall dream
Of us, who strive a little with the stream
Before we too go out beyond the day,
And are as much a memory as they.

And Death, so coming, shall not seem a thing
Of any fear, nor terrible his wing.
We too shall be a tale on earth, and time
Shall shape our pilgrimage into a rhyme.

A SABBATH DAY

IN FIVE WATCHES

I. MORNING

(TO M. C.)

You were three men and women two,
And well I loved you, all of you,
  And well we kept the Sabbath day.
The bells called out of Malvern town,
But never bell could call us down
  As we went up the hill away.

Was it a thousand years ago
Or yesterday that men were so
  Zealous of creed and argument?
Here wind is brother to the rain,
And the hills laugh upon the plain,
  And the old brain-gotten feuds are spent.

Bring lusty laughter, lusty jest,
Bring each the song he names the best,
  Bring eager thought and speech that's keen,
Tell each his tale and tell it out,
The only shame be prudent doubt,
  Bring bodies where the lust is clean.

II. FULL DAY

(TO K. D.)

We moved along the gravelled way
  Between the laurels and the yews,
Some touch of old enchantment lay
  About us, some remembered news
Of men who rode among the trees
  With burning dreams of Camelot,
Whose names are beauty's litanies,
  As Galahad and Launcelot.

We looked along the vaulted gloom
  Of boughs unstripped of winter's bane,
As for some pride of scarf and plume
  And painted shield and broidered rein,
And through the cloven laurel walls
  We searched the darkling pines and pale
Beech-boles and woodbine coronals,
  As for the passing of the Grail.

But Launcelot no travel keeps,
  For brother Launcelot is dead,
And brother Galahad he sleeps
  This long while in his quiet bed,
And we are all the knights that pass
  Among the yews and laurels now.
They are but fruit among the grass,
  And we but fruit upon the bough.

No coloured blazon meets us here
  Of all that courtly company;
Elaine is not, nor Guenevere,
  The dream is but of dreams that die.
But yet the purple violet lies
  Beside the golden daffodil,
And women strong of limb and wise
  And fierce of blood are with us still.

And never through the woodland goes
  The Grail of that forgotten quest,
But still about the woodland flows
  The sap of God made manifest
In boughs that labour to their time,
  And birds that gossip secret things,
And eager lips that seek to rhyme
  The latest of a thousand springs.

III. DUSK

(TO E. S. V.)

We come from the laurels and daffodils
  Down to the homestead under the fell,
We've gathered our hunger upon the hills,
  And that is well.

Howbeit to-morrow gives or takes,
  And leads to barren or flowering ways,
We've a linen cloth and wheaten cakes,
  For which be praise.

Here in the valley at lambing-time
  The shepherd folk of their watching tell
While the shadows up to the beacon climb,
  And that is well.

Let be what may when we make an end
  Of the laughter and labour of all our days
We've men to friend and women to friend,
  For whom be praise.

IV. EVENSONG

(TO B. M.)

COME, let us tell it over,
Each to each by the fireside,
How that earth has been a swift adventure for us,
And the watches of the day as a gay song and a right song,
And now the traveller wind has found a bed,
And the sheep crowd under the thorn.

Good was the day and our travelling,
And now there is evensong to sing.

Night, and along the valleys
Watch the eyes of the homesteads.
The dark hills are very still and still are the stars.
Patiently under the ploughlands the wheat moves and the barley.
The secret hour of love is upon the sky,
And our thought in praise is aflame.

Sing evensong as well we may
For our travel upon this Sabbath day.

Earth, we have known you truly,
Heard your mutable music,
Have been your lovers and felt the savour of you,

And you have quickened in us the blood's fire
and the heart's fire.
We have wooed and striven with you and made
you ours
By the strength sprung out of your loins.

Lift the latch on its twisted thong,
And an end be made of our evensong.

V. NIGHT

(TO H. S. S.)

THE barriers of sleep are crossed
And I alone am yet awake,
Keeping another Pentecost
For that new visitation's sake
Of life descending on the hills
In blackthorn bloom and daffodils.

At peace upon my pillow lain
I celebrate the spirit come
In spring's immutable youth again
Across the lands of Christendom;
I hear in all the choral host
The coming of the Holy Ghost.

The sacrament of bough and blade,
Of populous folds and building birds
I take, till now an end is made
Of praise and ceremonial words,
And I too turn myself to keep
The quiet festival of sleep.

March 1913.

WED

I MARRIED him on Christmas morn,—
Ah woe betide, ah woe betide,
Folk said I was a comely bride,—
Ah me forlorn.

All braided was my golden hair,
And heavy then, and shining then,
My limbs were sweet to madden men,—
O cunning snare.

My beauty was a thing they say
Of large renown,—O dread renown,—
Its rumour travelled through the town,
Alas the day.

His kisses burn my mouth and brows,—
O burning kiss, O barren kiss,—
My body for his worship is,
And so he vows.

But daily many men draw near
With courtly speech and subtle speech;
I gather from the lips of each
A deadly fear.

As he grows sullen I grow cold,
And whose the blame? Not mine the blame;
Their passions round me as a flame
All fiercely fold.

And oh, to think that he might be
So proudly set, above them set,
If he might but awaken yet
The soul of me.

Will no man seek and seeking find
The soul of me, the soul of me?
Nay, even as they are, so is he,
And all are blind.

On Christmas morning we were wed,
Ah me the morn, the luckless morn;
Now poppies burn along the corn,
Would I were dead.

UNCROWNED

She drew the patterned curtains back
And let the moonlight in
And the cool night. There was no lack
Of lures that lead to sin
About her grey eyes tenanted
By secret laughters proud,
Her ripe lips were a miracle,
Her hair fell as a cloud
About her shoulders, and she stood
Most beautiful, a flame
Of passion tortured in the winds,
Her womanhood a shame,
Her beauty burning as a wound,
Her love a thing of blame.

A loathèd thing her love it seemed,
For ill her love had grown
As rotting fruit beneath the boughs
Among the grass unmown,
Beautiful once in sun and rain
And good winds cheerly blown.

Men came, a courtly crowd, to her,
And spoke of love aloud to her,
Day-long, day-long, they flattered her,
And called her beauty good,
But no man came with secret flame
To cover her and lend her name

A glory that should leaven all
Her holy womanhood—
Her hungry womanhood.

She watched the other women go
With quiet mates, the women so
Far set below her in the things
That make a woman fair.
And now she leant across the night,
Breast open to the soft moonlight,
And silver arrows of the moon
Were splintered in her hair.

" O God of all the yellow fields
Of stubble, God of stars,
Why should the woman that is me
Be prisoned in the bars
Fashioned by men because their eyes
Are sealed, their sweet souls dead—
Why should my armoured pride so make
Uncomraded my bed ?

" For that my beauty is a thing
To make a proven tale,
My speech to keep tired lids awake,
My laughter like a sail
Rippled upon a golden sea,
My wit a thing of worth,
They make a common troll of me,
Lord of the quiet earth.

" My name is heard throughout the land,
Men sing my body's praise,
They listen when I laugh, my words
Are coveted, my days
Are rich in tribute, yet I find
No man that dares to be
Lord of the secret heart I bear,
The woman that is me.

" How shall I speak ? How, being proud,
Shall I cry out that this
Woman they praise is hungering
For one unfettered kiss,
That she they make a song-burden
Is starving while they sing,
Starving among them all, O God,
How shall I cry this thing ?

" Hidden within my body's flame
And flames which are my soul
A secret beauty lies. Until
One rides to make it whole,
To set it on his brow, to make
It free yet never free,
Crying for birth goes wandering
The woman that is me.

" And while I wait I have no joy
Of homage nor the things
That make the seasons beautiful,
And folded are the wings

Whereon—ah well, night moves apace,
Anew the dawn-tide runs,—
Day and the little light that is
The shadow of Thy suns."

She curtained out the moonlight, pale
In marriage with the day.
As golden nets her golden hair
Along the pillows lay;
And the wind stirred among the leaves,
And God's work went its way.

DERELICT

The cloudy peril of the seas,
The menace of mid-winter days,
May break the scented boughs of ease
And lock the lips of praise,
But every sea its harbour knows,
And every winter wakes to spring,
And every broken song the rose
Shall yet resing.

But comfortable love once spent
May not re-shape its broken trust,
Or find anew the old content,
Dishonoured in the dust;
No port awaits those tattered sails,
No sun rides high above that gloom,
Unchronicled those half-told tales
Shall time entomb.

RECKONING

I HEARD my love go laughing
  Beyond the bolted door,
I saw my love go riding
  Across the windy moor,
And I would give my love no word
Because of evil tales I heard.

Let fancy men go laughing,
  Let light men ride away,
Bruised corn is not for my mill,
  What's paid I will not pay,—
And so I thought because of this
Gossip that poisoned clasp and kiss.

Four hundred men went riding,
  And he the best of all,
A jolly man for labour,
  A sinewy man and tall;
I watched him go beyond the hill,
And shaped my anger with my will.

At night my love came riding
  Across the dusky moor,
And other two rode with him
  Who knocked my bolted door,
And called me out and bade me see
How quiet a man a man could be.

And now the tales that stung me
  And gave my pride its rule,
Are worth a beggar's broken shoe
  Or the sermon of a fool,
And all I know and all I can
Is, false or true, he was my man.

PIERROT

Pierrot alone,
And then Pierrette,
And then a story to forget.

Pierrot alone.
Pierrette among the apple boughs
Come down and take a Pierrot's kiss,
The moon is white upon your brows,
Pierrette among the apple boughs,
Your lips are cold, and I would set
A rose upon your lips, Pierrette,
A rosy kiss,
Pierrette, Pierrette.

And then Pierrette.
I've left my apple boughs, Pierrot,
A shadow now is on my face,
But still my lips are cold, and O
No rose is on my lips, Pierrot,
You laugh, and then you pass away
Among the scented leaves of May,
And on my face
The shadows stay.

And then a story to forget.
The petals fall upon the grass,
And I am crying in the dark,
The clouds above the white moon pass—
My tears are falling on the grass;

Pierrot, Pierrot, I heard your vows
And left my blossomed apple boughs,
And sorrows dark
Are on my brows.

LOVE'S PERSONALITY

If I had never seen
Thy sweet grave face,
If I had never known
Thy pride as of a queen,
Yet would another's grace
Have led me to her throne.

I should have loved as well
Not loving thee,
My faith had been as strong
Wrought by another spell;
Her love had grown to be
As thine for fire and song.

Yet is our love a thing
Alone, austere,
A new and sacred birth
That we alone could bring
Through flames of faith and fear
To pass upon the earth.

As one who makes a rhyme
Of his fierce thought,
With momentary art
May challenge change and time,
So is the love we wrought
Not greatest, but apart.

LOVE

Lord of the host of deep desires
That spare no sting, yet are to me
Sole echo of the silver choirs
Whose dwelling is eternity,

With all save thee my soul is pressed
In high dispute from day to day,
But, Love, at thy most high behest
I make no answer, and obey.

LOVERS TO LOVERS

Our love forsworn
Was very love upon a day;
Bitterness now, forlorn,
This tattered love once went as proud a way
As any born.

You well have kept
Your love from all corrupting things,
Your house of love is swept
And bright for use; whatso each season brings
You may accept

In pride. But we?
Our date of love is dead. Our blind
Brief moment was to be
The sum, yet was it signed as yours, and signed
Indelibly.

THE INVIOLABLE HOUR

If ever you with riches should be bought,
And all your life become a little thing,
And all the bright adventure of your thought
Be curbed; if time should bring
The passionate promise of your youth to naught;

If you should never find the lordly will
To stir your beauty to a flame of flowers,
If, robed in precious merchandise, you still
Are subject to the powers
That bruise the grain God sows along the hill;

If you should sell yourself in any wise
Save at love's bidding, and so fall to be
Life's drudge and outcast, yet, for that your eyes
No longer then should see
The light that once they borrowed from the skies,

You went of your own sorrow unaware
Save in swift moments of remembered days
When still the stars were tangled in your hair,
And all your limbs were praise,
And all your movement as a lyric prayer—

Should it be so, will you remember this,
That once a man, who watched your beauty grow,
And knew the waxing peril of your kiss,
And saw you turn and go,
Unweaponed, towards the world's untried abyss,

Made in his heart a record that your soul
Immortal beauty had, that you were strong
To keep the proudest purpose of you whole,
To meet the proudest wrong
Should look your vagrant spirit to control,—

Will you remember this? The days may prove
The things alone of little worth in you,
You may beguile yourself that life and love,
So seared, have had their due,
That you in your right constellation move.

It may be so; and you may violate
The seedling hope sown in a waste of fears,
Yet in his thought shall you be consecrate
With your immortal peers,
Your laughter true, your soul immaculate.

LIEGEWOMAN

You may not wear immortal leaves
  Nor yet go laurelled in your days,
But he believes
  Who loves you with most intimate praise
    That none on earth has ever gone,
    In whom a cleanlier spirit shone.

You may be unremembered when
  Our chronicles are piled in dust:
No matter then—
  None ever bore a lordlier lust
    To know the savour sweet or sour
    Down to the dregs of every hour.

And this your epitaph shall be—
  "Within life's house her eager words
Continually
  Lightened as wings of arrowy birds:
    She was life's house-fellow, she knew
    The passion of him, soul and thew."

DEDICATION OF *POEMS OF LOVE AND EARTH*

(TO MY WIFE)

My words are here of immemorial things,
The labouring earth, the swift unwearied wings
  Of Love that ever circle earth about,
Pity for stricken men and pride that they
Yet look with eyes heroic on the day,
  Creators in the void and lords of doubt ;

Of women who, albeit nursing yet
Remembrance of the things we would forget,
  Spoiled of so much, so little paid in fee,
Keep bright in wonder and in worship still
The hearts of men so troubled to fulfil,
  Not wholly shamed, the end that is to be.

Of secret exultations of the year,
Fierce inarticulate passions that are near
  In ecstasy to God's imagining,
Of men who wake each day as to a proud
Adventure, and go down to sleep unbowed,
  To dream alone of what the dawn may bring.

My words are these. And of my age what word ?
Are not of these the ultimate longings heard
  Upon the lips of every storied age ?
What little vision may be mine of these
Is clear or clouded as my day decrees,
  The time's my tutor, and my song the wage.

And you, my Lady, to whose lap I bring
This little treasure of my voyaging,
  Of you I take how much, of how great worth—
Of your hands healing, peace of your good care,
Of your hope strength all perilous things to dare,
  And fellowship in you with Love and Earth.

FROM LONDON

God of the cherry-bloom in the orchards of calm,
Of sunlight on the little chestnut-leaves,
Of ghost-winged bees round the tassels of the palm,
Be near me in this place. My spirit grieves.

I shall return unto thy kingdom soon,
There is one waits my coming, and her brows
Are gravely turned upon thy heaped and fragrant boon
Of daffodils and twisted budding boughs.

The scent of the ploughlands is calling me away,
The chatter of the rooks, the open skies,
And she I know is waiting with the glory of the day
And the shadow of the night in her eyes.

ROUNDELS OF THE YEAR

I caught the changes of the year
In soft and fragile nets of song,
For you to whom my days belong.

For you to whom each day is dear
Of all the high processional throng,
I caught the changes of the year
In soft and fragile nets of song.

And here some sound of beauty, here
Some note of ancient, ageless wrong
Reshaping as my lips were strong,
I caught the changes of the year
In soft and fragile nets of song,
For you to whom my days belong.

I

The spring is passing through the land
In web of ghostly green arrayed,
And blood is warm in man and maid.

The arches of desire have spanned
The barren ways, the debt is paid,
The spring is passing through the land
In web of ghostly green arrayed.

Sweet scents along the winds are fanned
From shadowy wood and secret glade
Where beauty blossoms unafraid,
The spring is passing through the land
In web of ghostly green arrayed,
And blood is warm in man and maid.

II

Proud insolent June with burning lips
Holds riot now from sea to sea,
And shod in sovran gold is she.

To the full flood of reaping slips
The seeding-tide by God's decree,
  Proud insolent June with burning lips
  Holds riot now from sea to sea.

And all the goodly fellowships
Of bird and bloom and beast and tree
Are gallant of her company—
  Proud insolent June with burning lips
  Holds riot now from sea to sea,
  And shod in sovran gold is she.

III

The loaded sheaves are harvested,
The sheep are in the stubbled fold,
The tale of labour crowned is told.

The wizard of the year has spread
A glory over wood and wold,
  The loaded sheaves are harvested,
  The sheep are in the stubbled fold.

The yellow apples and the red
Bear down the boughs, the hazels hold
No more their fruit in cups of gold.
  The loaded sheaves are harvested,
  The sheep are in the stubbled fold,
  The tale of labour crowned is told.

IV

The year is lapsing into time
Along a deep and songless gloom,
Unchapleted of leaf or bloom.

And mute between the dusk and prime
The diligent earth resets her loom,—
  The year is lapsing into time
  Along a deep and songless gloom.

While o'er the snows the seasons chime
Their golden hopes to reillume
The brief eclipse about the tomb,
  The year is lapsing into time
  Along a deep and songless gloom
  Unchapleted of leaf or bloom.

V

Not wise as cunning scholars are,
With curious words upon your tongue,
Are you for whom my song is sung.

But you are wise of cloud and star,
And winds and boughs all blossom-hung,
Not wise as cunning scholars are,
With curious words upon your tongue.

Surely, clear child of earth, some far
Dim Dryad-haunted groves among,
Your lips to lips of knowledge clung—
Not wise as cunning scholars are,
With curious words upon your tongue,
Are you for whom my song is sung.

THE MIRACLE

Come, sweetheart, listen, for I have a thing
Most wonderful to tell you—news of spring.

Albeit winter still is in the air,
And the earth troubled, and the branches bare,

Yet down the fields to-day I saw her pass—
The spring—her feet went shining through the
grass.

She touched the ragged hedgerows—I have seen
Her finger-prints, most delicately green;

And she has whispered to the crocus leaves,
And to the garrulous sparrows in the eaves.

Swiftly she passed and shyly, and her fair
Young face was hidden in her cloudy hair.

She would not stay, her season is not yet,
But she has reawakened, and has set

The sap of all the world astir, and rent
Once more the shadows of our discontent.

Triumphant news—a miracle I sing—
The everlasting miracle of spring.

DOMINION

I WENT beneath the sunny sky
When all things bowed to June's desire,—
The pansy with its steadfast eye,
The blue shells on the lupin spire,

The swelling fruit along the boughs,
The grass grown heady in the rain,
Dark roses fitted for the brows
Of queens great kings have sung in vain;

My little cat with tiger bars,
Bright claws all hidden in content;
Swift birds that flashed like darkling stars
Across the cloudy continent;

The wiry-coated fellow curled
Stump-tailed upon the sunny flags;
The bees that sacked a coloured world
Of treasure for their honey-bags.

And all these things seemed very glad,
The sun, the flowers, the birds on wing,
The jolly beasts, the furry-clad
Fat bees, the fruit, and everything.

But gladder than them all was I,
  Who, being man, might gather up
The joy of all beneath the sky,
  And add their treasure to my cup,

And travel every shining way,
  And laugh with God in God's delight,
Create a world for every day,
  And store a dream for every night.

A WARWICKSHIRE SONG

THERE are no oaks in all the shires
I love so well as those that spill
Smooth acorns from their mailèd cups
Along the Warwick lanes; and still
The Avon holds as clear a way
As Tweed or Thames, and never blows
The wind along a sweeter land
Than that wheredown the Avon goes.

On northern hill and Sussex down,
In Derby dale and Lincoln fen,
I've trafficked with the winds of God
And talked and laughed with many men;
I've seen the ploughshare break the earth
From Cumberland to woody Kent;
I've followed Severn to the sea,
And heard the swollen tide of Trent.

I know the south, I know the north,
I've walked the counties up and down,
I've seen the ships go round the coast
From Mersey dock to London town;
I've seen the spires of east and west,
And sung for joy of what I've seen,
But oh, my heart is ever fain
Of ways where Avon's oaks are green.

AT GRAFTON

GOD laughed when he made Grafton
That's under Bredon Hill,
A jewel in a jewelled plain.
The seasons work their will
On golden thatch and crumbling stone,
And every soft-lipped breeze
Makes music for the Grafton men
In comfortable trees.

God's beauty over Grafton
Stole into roof and wall,
And hallowed every pavèd path
And every lowly stall,
And to a woven wonder
Conspired with one accord
The labour of the servant,
The labour of the Lord.

And momently to Grafton
Comes in from vale and wold
The sound of sheep unshepherded,
The sound of sheep in fold,
And, blown along the bases
Of lands that set their wide
Frank brows to God, comes chanting
The breath of Bristol tide.

A PICTURE

Two candles oaken-set upon blue folds,
No other light save the unclouded stars,
Their clusters broken by the scented downs
Massed up above us in the southern sky.
Two candles oaken-set upon blue folds,
Sending their little light along the board
Laid out beneath a honeysuckle hedge
In the cool dusk, with hospitable fare.
Blue folds clear-cut along the table's rim,
Until they meet the delicate blue robe
Of one who sends soft laughter through the hush,
Her face the haunt of clear repose and swift
Ripples of humour, gracious, mellowing.

. . . . .

We shall remember in the barren days
Blue folds and raiment, little oaken lights,
The moth stars flitting through the ghostly dusk,
Fair brow and slender throat and kindly speech,
A hermitage of leaves and shadows, set
In the deep hollow of the Sussex hills.

JANUARY DUSK

Austere and clad in sombre robes of grey,
With hands upfolded and with silent wings,
In unimpassioned mystery the day
Passes; a lonely thrush its requiem sings.

The dust of night is tangled in the boughs
Of leafless lime and lilac, and the pine
Grows blacker, and the star upon the brows
Of sleep is set in heaven for a sign.

Earth's little weary peoples fall on peace
And dream of breaking buds and blossoming,
Of primrose airs, of days of large increase,
And all the coloured retinue of spring.

MORNING THANKSGIVING

THANK God for sleep in the long quiet night,
For the clear day calling through the little leaded panes,
For the shining well-water and the warm golden light,
And the paths washed white by singing rains.

We thank Thee, O God, for exultation born
Of the kiss of Thy winds, for life among the leaves,
For the whirring wings that pass about the wonder of the morn,
For the changing plumes of swallows gliding upwards to their eaves.

For the treasure of the garden, the gillyflowers of gold,
The prouder petalled tulips, the primrose full of spring,
For the crowded orchard boughs, and the swelling buds that hold
A yet unwoven wonder, to Thee our praise we bring.

Thank God for good bread, for the honey in the comb,
For the brown-shelled eggs, for the clustered blossoms set

Beyond the open window in a pink and cloudy
foam,
For the laughing loves among the branches
met.

For the kind-faced women we bring our thanks
to Thee,
With shapely mothering arms and grave eyes
clear and blithe,
For the tall young men, strong-thewed as men
may be,
For the old man bent above his scythe.

For earth's little secret and innumerable ways,
For the carol and the colour, Lord, we bring
What things may be of thanks, and that Thou
hast lent our days
Eyes to see and ears to hear and lips to sing.

JUNE DANCE

THE chestnut cones were in the lanes,
Blushing, and eyed with ebony,
And young oak-apples lovingly
Clung to their stems with rosy veins
Threading their glossy amber; still
As wind may be, among the bloom
Of lilac and the burning broom
The dear wind moved deliciously,
And stayed upon the fragrant hill
And lightened on the sea;
And brushed the nettles nodding through
The budding globes of cloudy may,
And wavelike flowed upon the blue
Flowers of the woods.
It was a day
When pearled blossom of peach and pear
Of blossoming season made an end,
Drifting along the sunlight, rare
Of beauty as thoughts between friend and friend
That have no cunning, but merely know
The way of truth for the heart is so.

It was such a time at the birth of June,
When the day was hushed at the hour of noon,
And whispering leaves gave out a tune
Ghostly as moves the bodiless moon
High in the full-day skies of June,
That they passed, a throng

Of toilers whose eyes
Were dull with toiling, passed along
By a path that lies
Between the city of mean emprise
And a forest set in mellow lands,
Far out from the city of broken hands.

Meanly clad, with bodies worn,
They came upon the forest hour,
From open fields of springing corn
To cloistered shades
They passed, from June light to June bower,
Tall men, and maids
Deep-bosomed, apt for any seed
That life should passionately sow,
Yet pale and troubled of a creed
Cried out by men who nothing know
Of joy's diviner excellence.
Along the silent glades they stept,
Till, flowing in each drowsy sense,
June came upon them, and they slept.

Beneath cool clustered branch and bloom,
Littered with stars of amethyst,
Sun-arrows glancing through the gloom,
They slept ; the lush young bracken kissed
The tired forms. Ah, well-away,
Within so wide a peace to see
Fellows who measure every day
Merely the roads of misery.

Tall men, deep-bosomed maids were they,
As who should face the world and run
Fleet-footed down the laughing way,
With brows set fearless to the sun,
But slackened were the rippling thews
And all clean moods of courage dead,
Defeated by ignoble use
And sullen dread.

So in the sweet June-tide they slept,
Nor any dream of healing deep
Came over them; heart-sick they kept
A troubled sleep;
Companions of calamity,
Their sleep was but remembered pain,
And all their hunger but to be
Poor pilgrims in oblivion's train.

The stems each had a little shadow
In the early afternoon,
When the toilers first were lured
By a music long immured
In the central forest ways
Where no human footfall strays,
To the dreaming dance of June.

One by one they woke, their faces
Still with some new wonder,
As when in quiet shadowy places
Wandering hands may move asunder

Secret foliage, and intrude
On the ancestral solitude
Of some untutored forest thing—
Neither doubt nor fear they bring,
But just a strange new wonder.

So now the toilers woke. No thought
Of the old-time trouble came
Over them ; the cares deep-wrought,
Furrowing, by years of shame,
Lightened, as upon their ears
Fell a music very low,
Sweet with moving of the years,
Burdened with the beat and flow
Of a garnered ecstasy
Gathered from the deeps of pain,
Music vaster than the sea,
Softer than the rain.

Then they rose,—the music played
But a little way ahead.
And with never question made
They were well to follow. Red
And gold and opal flashed the noon
On lichened trunk. Their raiment mean
Grew heavy in the dance of June,
And man and maid among the green
Unburdened them, and stood revealed
In clean unblushing loveliness,
Clear glowing limbs, all supple, steeled
And shining ; many a streaming tress
Slipped beautiful to breast and knee,

They proved a world where was no sin,
Exultant, pure in passion, free,
Young captives bidden to begin
New being. Sweet the music called,
Promising immortal boon,
Swift they set their feet, enthralled,
To the dreaming dance of June.

They passed into the forest's heart,
Where the shadows thickened,
Soul and trembling body thrilled
With a joy new-quickened.
It was as though from early days
Their familiars
Had been the words of worship of the lonely
woodland ways,
And the articulate voices of the stars.

Keeping perfect measure
To the music's chime,
Reaping all the treasure
Of the summer time,
Noiselessly along the glades,
Lithe white limbs all glancing,
Comely men and comely maids
Drifted in their dancing.

When chestnut-cones were in the lanes,
Blushing, and eyed with ebony,
And young oak-apples lovingly
Clung to their stems with rosy veins

Threading their glossy amber—then
They took them to faring, maids and men,
Whose eyes were dull with toiling, far
From their toil in the time of a perfect noon,
To where the quiet shadows are,
And joined the dreaming dance of June.

LATE SUMMER

THOUGH summer long delayeth
  Her blue and golden boon,
Yet now at length she stayeth
  Her wings above the noon;
She sets the waters dreaming
  To murmurous leafy tones,
The weeded waters gleaming
  Above the stepping-stones.

Where fern and ivied willow
  Lean o'er the seaward brook,
I read a volume mellow—
  A poet's fairy-book;
The seaward brook is narrow,
  The hazel spans its pride,
And like a painted arrow
  The king-bird keeps the tide.

THE BROKEN GATE

I KNOW a little broken gate
  Beneath the apple-boughs and pines,
The seasons lend it coloured state,
  And round its hinge the ivy twines—
The ivy and the bloomless rose,
  And autumn berries flaming red;
The pine its gracious scent bestows,
  The apple-boughs their treasure shed.

It opens on an orchard hung
  With heavy-laden boughs that spill
Their brown and yellow fruit among
  The withered stems of daffodil:
The river from its shallows freed
  Here falls upon a stirless peace,
The tides of time suspended lead
  The tired spirit to release.

A little land of mellowed ease
  I find beyond my broken gate,
I hear amid the laden trees
  A magic song, and there elate
I pass along from sound and sight
  Of men who fret the world away,—
I gather rich and rare delight
  Where every day is holy day.

IN THE WOODS

I was in the woods to-day,
And the leaves were spinning there,
Rich apparelled in decay,—
In decay more wholly fair
Than in life they ever were.

Gold and rich barbaric red
Freakt with pale and sapless vein,
Spinning, spinning, spun and sped
With a little sob of pain
Back to harbouring earth again.

Long in homely green they shone
Through the summer rains and sun,
Now their humbleness is gone,
Now their little season run,
Pomp and pageantry begun.

Sweet was life and buoyant breath,
Lovely too; but for a day
Issues from the house of death
Yet more beautiful array:
Hark, a whisper—"Come away."

One by one they spin and fall,
But they fall in regal pride:
Dying, do they hear a call
Rising from an ebbless tide,
And, hearing, are beatified?

TRAVEL TALK

LADYWOOD, 1912

To the high hills you took me, where desire,
Daughter of difficult life, forgets her lures,
And hope's eternal tasks no longer tire,
And only peace endures.
Where anxious prayer becomes a worthless thing
Subdued by muted praise,
And asking nought of God and life we bring
The conflict of long days
Into a moment of immortal poise
Among the scars and proud unbuilded spires,
Where, seeking not the triumphs and the joys
So treasured in the world, we kindle fires
That shall not burn to ash, and are content
To read anew the eternal argument.

Nothing of man's intolerance we know
Here, far from man, among the fortressed hills,
Nor of his querulous hopes.
To what may we attain ? What matter, so
We feel the unwearied virtue that fulfils
These cloudy crests and rifts and heathered slopes
With life that is and seeks not to attain,
For ever spends nor ever asks again ?

To the high hills you took me. And we saw
The everlasting ritual of sky

And earth and the waste places of the air,
And momently the change of changeless law
Was beautiful before us, and the cry
Of the great winds was as a distant prayer
From a massed people, and the choric sound
Of many waters moaning down the long
Veins of the hills was as an undersong;
And in that hour we moved on holy ground.

To the high hills you took me. Far below
Lay pool and tarn locked up in shadowy sleep;
Above we watched the clouds unhasting go
From hidden crest to crest; the neighbour sheep
Cropped at our side, and swift on darkling wings
The hawks went sailing down the valley wind,
The rock-bird chattered shrilly to its kind;
And all these common things were holy things.

From ghostly Skiddaw came the wind in flight.
By Langdale Pikes to Coniston's broad brow,
From Coniston to proud Helvellyn's height,
The eloquent wind, the wind that even now
Whispers again its story gathered in
For seasons of much traffic in the ways
Where men so straitly spin
The garment of unfathomable days.

To the high hills you took me. And we turned
Our feet again towards the friendly vale,

And passed the banks whereon the bracken
burned
And the last foxglove bells were spent and pale,
Down to a hallowed spot of English land
Where Rotha dreams its way from mere to mere,
Where one with undistracted vision scanned
Life's far horizons, he who sifted clear
Dust from the grain of being, making song
Memorial of simple men and minds
Not bowed to cunning by deliberate wrong,
And conversed with the spirit of the winds,
And knew the guarded secrets that were sealed
In pool and pine, petal and vagrant wing,
Throning the shepherd folding from the field,
Robing anew the daffodils of spring.

We crossed the threshold of his home and stood
Beside his cottage hearth where once was told
The day's adventure drawn from fell and wood
And wisdom's words and love's were manifold,
Where, in the twilight, gossip poets met
To read again their peers of older time,
And quiet eyes of gracious women set
A bounty to the glamour of the rhyme.

There is a wonder in a simple word
That reinhabits fond and ghostly ways,
And when within the poet's walls we heard
One white with ninety years recall the days

When he upon his mountain paths was seen,
We answered her strange bidding and were made
One with the reverend presence who had been
Steward of kingly charges unbetrayed.

And to the little garden-close we went,
Where he at eventide was wont to pass
To watch the willing day's last sacrament,
And the cool shadows thrown along the grass
To read again the legends of the flowers,
Lighten with song th' obscure heroic plan,
To contemplate the process of the hours,
And think on that old story which is man.
The lichened apple-boughs that once had spent
Their blossoms at his feet, in twisted age
Yet knew the wind, and the familiar scent
Of heath and fern made sweet his hermitage.
And, moving so beneath his cottage-eaves,
His song upon our lips, his life a star,
A sign, a storied peace among the leaves,
Was he not with us then ? He was not far.

To the high hills you took me. We had seen
Much marvellous traffic in the cloudy ways,
Had laughed with the white waters and the green,
Had praised and heard the choric chant of praise,

Communed anew with the undying dead,
Resung old songs, retold old fabulous things,
And, stripped of pride, had lost the world and
led
A world refashioned as unconquered kings.

And the good day was done, and there again
Where is your home of quietness we stood,
Far from the sight and sound of travelling men,
And watched the twilight climb from Lady-
wood
Above the pines, above the visible streams,
Beyond the hidden sources of the rills,
Bearing the season of uncharted dreams
Into the silent fastness of the hills.

Peace on the hills, and in the valleys peace;
And Rotha's moaning music sounding clear;
The passing-song of wearied winds that cease,
Moving among the reeds of Rydal Mere;
The distant gloom of boughs that still unscarred
Beside their poet's grave due vigil keep—
With us were these, till night was throned and
starred
And bade us to the benison of sleep.

THE CROWNING OF DREAMING JOHN

I

Seven days he travelled
Down the roads of England,
Out of leafy Warwick lanes
Into London Town.
Grey and very wrinkled
Was Dreaming John of Grafton,
But seven days he walked to see
A king put on his crown.

Down the streets of London
He asked the crowded people
Where would be the crowning
And when would it begin.
He said he'd got a shilling,
A shining silver shilling,
But when he came to Westminster
They wouldn't let him in.

Dreaming John of Grafton
Looked upon the people,
Laughed a little laugh, and then
Whistled and was gone.
Out along the long roads,
The twisting roads of England,
Back into the Warwick lanes
Wandered Dreaming John.

II

As twilight touched with her ghostly fingers
All the meadows and mellow hills,
And the great sun swept in his robes of glory—
Woven of petals of daffodils
And jewelled and fringed with leaves of the roses—
Down the plains of the western way,
Among the rows of the scented clover
Dreaming John in his dreaming lay.

Since dawn had folded the stars of heaven
He'd counted a score of miles and five,
And now, with a vagabond heart untroubled
And proud as the properest man alive,
He sat him down with a limber spirit
That all men covet and few may keep,
And he watched the summer draw round her beauty
The shadow that shepherds the world to sleep.

And up from the valleys and shining rivers,
And out of the shadowy wood-ways wild,
And down from the secret hills, and streaming
Out of the shimmering undefiled
Wonder of sky that arched him over,
Came a company shod in gold
And girt in gowns of a thousand blossoms,
Laughing and rainbow-aureoled.

Wrinkled and grey and with eyes a-wonder
And soul beatified, Dreaming John
Watched the marvellous company gather
While over the clover a glory shone ;
They bore on their brows the hues of heaven,
Their limbs were sweet with flowers of the fields,
And their feet were bright with the gleaming
treasure
That prodigal earth to her children yields.

They stood before him, and John was laughing
As they were laughing ; he knew them all,
Spirits of trees and pools and meadows,
Mountain and windy waterfall,
Spirits of clouds and skies and rivers,
Leaves and shadows and rain and sun,
A crowded, jostling, laughing army,
And Dreaming John knew every one.

Among them then was a sound of singing
And chiming music, as one came down
The level rows of the scented clover,
Bearing aloft a flashing crown ;
No word of a man's desert was spoken,
Nor any word of a man's unworth,
But there on the wrinkled brow it rested,
And Dreaming John was king of the earth.

III

Dreaming John of Grafton
Went away to London,
Saw the coloured banners fly,
Heard the great bells ring,
But though his tongue was civil
And he had a silver shilling,
They wouldn't let him in to see
The crowning of the King.

So back along the long roads,
The leafy roads of England,
Dreaming John went carolling,
Travelling alone,
And in a summer evening,
Among the scented clover,
He held before a shouting throng
A crowning of his own.

THE TRAVELLER

When March was master of furrow and fold,
And the skies kept cloudy festival,
And the daffodil pods were tipped with gold
And a passion was in the plover's call,
A spare old man went hobbling by
With a broken pipe and a tapping stick,
And he mumbled—" Blossom before I die,
Be quick, you little brown buds, be quick.

" I've weathered the world for a count of years—
Good old years of shining fire—
And death and the devil bring no fears,
And I've fed the flame of my last desire ;
I'm ready to go, but I'd pass the gate
On the edge of the world with an old heart sick
If I missed the blossoms. I may not wait—
The gate is open—be quick, be quick."

THE VAGABOND

I KNOW the pools where the grayling rise,
  I know the trees where the filberts fall,
I know the woods where the red fox lies,
  The twisted elms where the brown owls call.
And I've seldom a shilling to call my own,
  And there's never a girl I'd marry,
I thank the Lord I'm a rolling stone
  With never a care to carry.

I talk to the stars as they come and go
  On every night from July to June,
I'm free of the speech of the winds that blow,
  And I know what weather will sing what tune.
I sow no seed and I pay no rent,
  And I thank no man for his bounties,
But I've a treasure that's never spent,
  I'm lord of a dozen counties.

THE FECKENHAM MEN

The jolly men at Feckenham
Don't count their goods as common men,
Their heads are full of silly dreams
From half-past ten to half-past ten,
They'll tell you why the stars are bright,
And some sheep black and some sheep white.

The jolly men at Feckenham
Draw wages of the sun and rain,
And count as good as golden coin
The blossoms on the window-pane,
And Lord! they love a sinewy tale
Told over pots of foaming ale.

Now here's a tale of Feckenham
Told to me by a Feckenham man,
Who, being only eighty years,
Ran always when the red fox ran,
And looked upon the earth with eyes
As quiet as unclouded skies.

These jolly men of Feckenham
One day when summer strode in power
Went down, it seems, among their lands
And saw their bean fields all in flower—
"Wheat-ricks," they said, "be good to see;
What would a rick of blossoms be?"

So straight they brought the sickles out
And worked all day till day was done,
And builded them a good square rick
Of scented bloom beneath the sun.
And was not this I tell to you
A fiery-hearted thing to do?

OLD WOMAN IN MAY

"Old woman by the hedgerow
In gown of withered black,
With beads and pins and buttons
And ribbons in your pack—
How many miles do you go?
To Dumbleton and back?"

"To Dumbleton and back, sir,
And round by Cotsall Hill,
I count the miles at morning,
At night I count them still,
A Jill without a Jack, sir,
I travel with a will."

"It's little men are paying
For such as you can do,
You with the grey dust in your hair
And sharp nails in your shoe,
The young folks go a Maying,
But what is May to you?"

"I care not what they pay me
While I can hear the call
Of cattle on the hillside,
And watch the blossoms fall
In a churchyard where maybe
There's company for all."

IN LADY STREET

All day long the traffic goes
In Lady Street by dingy rows
Of sloven houses, tattered shops—
Fried fish, old clothes and fortune-tellers—
Tall trams on silver-shining rails,
With grinding wheels and swaying tops,
And lorries with their corded bales,
And screeching cars. "Buy, buy!" the sellers
Of rags and bones and sickening meat
Cry all day long in Lady Street.

And when the sunshine has its way
In Lady Street, then all the grey
Dull desolation grows in state
More dull and grey and desolate,
And the sun is a shamefast thing,
A lord not comely-housed, a god
Seeing what gods must blush to see,
A song where it is ill to sing,
And each gold ray despiteously
Lies like a gold ironic rod.

Yet one grey man in Lady Street
Looks for the sun. He never bent
Life to his will, his travelling feet
Have scaled no cloudy continent,
Nor has the sickle-hand been strong.
He lives in Lady Street; a bed,
Four cobwebbed walls.

But all day long
A time is singing in his head
Of youth in Gloucester lanes. He hears
The wind among the barley-blades,
The tapping of the woodpeckers
On the smooth beeches, thistle-spades
Slicing the sinewy roots; he sees
The hooded filberts in the copse
Beyond the loaded orchard trees,
The netted avenues of hops;
He smells the honeysuckle thrown
Along the hedge. He lives alone,
Alone—yet not alone, for sweet
Are Gloucester lanes in Lady Street.

Aye, Gloucester lanes. For down below
The cobwebbed room this grey man plies
A trade, a coloured trade. A show
Of many-coloured merchandise
Is in his shop. Brown filberts there,
And apples red with Gloucester air,
And cauliflowers he keeps, and round
Smooth marrows grown on Gloucester ground,
Fat cabbages and yellow plums,
And gaudy brave chrysanthemums.
And times a glossy pheasant lies
Among his store, not Tyrian dyes
More rich than are the neck-feathers;
And times a prize of violets,
Or dewy mushrooms satin-skinned

And times an unfamiliar wind
Robbed of its woodland favour stirs
Gay daffodils this grey man sets
Among his treasure.

All day long
In Lady Street the traffic goes
By dingy houses, desolate rows
Of shops that stare like hopeless eyes.
Day long the sellers cry their cries,
The fortune-tellers tell no wrong
Of lives that know not any right,
And drift, that has not even the will
To drift, toils through the day until
The wage of sleep is won at night.
But this grey man heeds not at all
The hell of Lady Street. His stall
Of many-coloured merchandise
He makes a shining paradise,
As all day long chrysanthemums
He sells, and red and yellow plums
And cauliflowers. In that one spot
Of Lady Street the sun is not
Ashamed to shine and send a rare
Shower of colour through the air;
The grey man says the sun is sweet
On Gloucester lanes in Lady Street.

EPILOGUE

Come tell us, you that travel far
With brave or shabby merchandise,
Have you saluted any star
That goes uncourtiered in the skies?

Do you remember leaf or wing
Or brook the willows leant along,
Or any small familiar thing
That passed you as you went along?

Or does the trade that is your lust
Drive you as yoke-beasts driven apace,
Making the world a road of dust
From market-place to market-place?

You traffic in the grain, the wine,
In purple and in cloth of gold,
In treasure of the field and mine,
In fables of the poets told,—

But have you laughed the wine-cups dry
And on the loaves of plenty fed,
And walked, with all your banners high,
In gold and purple garmented?

And do you know the songs you sell
And cry them out along the way?
And is the profit that you tell
After your travel day by day

Sinew and sap of life, or husk—
Dead coffer-ware or kindled brain?
And do you gather in the dusk
To make your heroes live again?

If the grey dust is over all,
And stars and leaves and wings forgot,
And your blood holds no festival—
Go out from us; we need you not.

But if you are immoderate men,
Zealots of joy, the salt and sting
And savour of life upon you—then
We call you to our counselling.

And we will hew the holy boughs
To make us level rows of oars,
And we will set our shining prows
For strange and unadventured shores.

Where the great tideways swiftliest run
We will be stronger than the strong,
And sack the cities of the sun,
And spend our booty in a song.

THE END

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Printed by Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ld., London and Aylesbury.

POEMS
1908–
1914
by John
Drink-
water

—

Sidgwick
and
Jackson
Ltd.

KV-186-659